

# Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

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Volume 9  
Issue 1 *The Journal of Mine Action*

Article 38

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August 2005

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Country Profile

*Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)*

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### Recommended Citation

Profile, Country (2005) "Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Journal of Mine Action* : Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 38.  
Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol9/iss1/38>

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**A**fter the death of Yugoslavia's ruler, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, in 1980, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) divided into five separate countries: Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), and the Republic of Macedonia. Since that period, BiH has faced many changes. Shortly after its declaration of independence from the SFRY in March of 1992, the country broke out in conflict that lasted three years and resulted in three million displaced persons, over 250,000 dead or missing, and 170,000 wounded. Hostile action was primarily conducted by the Bosnian government army, the Bosnian Croat army and the Bosnian Serb army. Three years later, a peace agreement was signed and the conflict subsided,

#### Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina

In December 1997, no transfer of AP mines from BiH has been reported; however, evidence suggests weapons smuggling continues. The Stabilization Force of BiH (SFOR) and the Bosnian police found caches of AP mines in 2001, 2002 and early 2003. According to the *Landmine Monitor Report*, as of 2004 BiH had not formally reported the existence of the most recently discovered stockpiles of AP mines and additional details are not currently available.

#### Mine Action in BiH

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMIC) has its roots in the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC), which began in 1996. By 1998, the government of BiH had taken responsibility for management of mine action (MA) in the country. According to BHMIC representatives Tatjana Bojinovic and Amela Balic, "There were a few phases of transformation from UNMAC in 1996, to BiH

Entities'<sup>1</sup> MACs [mine action centers] in 1998, and finally to the BHMIC in 2002." The need for MA is clear: not only is BiH the most contaminated country in Europe, but it is also one of the most mine-affected countries in the world. As of February 2004, over 100,000 people live in high-risk communities in BiH and about 600,000 live in medium-risk communities.

B H M A C ' s duties and activities include surveying, planning

and project development, prioritization, task definition, quality assurance, certification of cleared areas, maintenance of the central database, definition of stands, testing and accreditation, and coordination of all elements of MA. Resources available to help BHMIC meet its goals are 37 organizations, 42 demining machines, 91 dog teams and 2,158 trained deminers.

Humanitarian demining has been one of the center's biggest challenges since its start. Bojinovic and Balic explain, "From the beginning, the challenge was to develop national capacities and standards for humanitarian demining with the goal of planning, leading, organizing and controlling MA activities in the whole country. Now the biggest challenge for our organization is to conduct our MA strategy until 2009."<sup>2</sup>

Over the past 10 years, 48 square kilometers (18.53 square miles) have been cleared and plans will continue into the future. Bojinovic and Balic said, "Humanitarian clearance is the first condi-

tion for facilities reconstruction, sustainable return of refugees and full national development."<sup>2</sup> Some of the successes of BiH over the past few years include the development of national standard operating procedures and the preparation of a national strategy for 2005–2009. BiH has also stressed education of its staff in order to ensure a successful MAC.

#### Mine Clearance

As reported by the BHMIC, from 1996 through 2003, 45 square kilometers (17.37 square miles) of land were cleared of 1,495 AP mines, 156 anti-vehicle mines and 1,066 items of UXO. In 2003 alone, 29 percent of the land cleared was primarily land for infrastructure in the repatriation of refugees. An additional 27 percent of the land was cleared for agricultural purposes. In the Republika Srpska<sup>1</sup> 1,446,822 square meters (0.55 square mile) were cleared, in the Federation entity, 4,430,150 square meters (1.71 square miles) were cleared, and in Brčko District 534,975 square meters (0.20 square mile) were cleared in 2003. The BHMIC's long-term goal is to have the country cleared of all 15,210,000 square meters (5.87 square miles) of mined area by 2009.

#### A Helping Hand: Organizations That Aid BiH MA Activities

In BiH MA activities one of the largest venues for implementing change is mine risk education (MRE). Since 2003, MRE has been a formal part of BHMIC's MA agenda, and its MRE standards are based on those at the international level. MRE is targeted at everyone, including children, adults, teachers, and especially male farmers, as they have highest risk of injury or death from mine-related accidents. As reported by the *Landmine Monitor Report* 2004, 461 communities received MRE. The most common methods of information transmission are posters, signs, brochures and school presentations.

**UNICEF.** The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is one organization that offers MRE within the boundaries of BiH. Support is provided to school-age children in the form of school programs that stress the importance of mine awareness and injury prevention. Interactive puppet shows and workshops are effective visuals that enforce key concepts in MRE. Training is also provided for adults and teachers. This training is geared to help teachers incorporate MRE into core school subjects, thus exposing children of many ages to information on mine risks. Incidentally, MRE is a mandatory subject in five of the 10 Federation cantons and in Brčko district. The Republika Srpska made MRE mandatory beginning with the 2004–2005 school year.



but not before BiH became a wasteland of landmines and items of UXO. Since that time, efforts have been undertaken to remove the threat of landmines in BiH and to restore economic stability through infrastructure and support. In April 2004, the estimated contaminated area in BiH was 2,780 square kilometers (1,073.36 square miles). Currently, the predicted cost for making BiH safe from mines by 2010 is \$334 million (U.S.).

#### Landmine/UXO Use

Prior to 1990, the SFRY had approximately six million mines of all types at its disposal and it still possessed those mines at the start of conflict in 1992. According to the Demining Commission, production of AP mines ended by 1995. Since the landmine factories closed, BiH has considered using the facilities for other purposes such as automobile production. Since the country signed the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention

**SFOR.** SFOR has initiated MRE in BiH with a focus on educating troops, specifically the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union police monitors and embassy staff. SFOR contracts Moving Theatre, an MRE organization, to teach mine education by performing for primary-school children. Between 1999 and May 2004, Moving Theatre performed 1,758 shows. Additional training was given to interpreters who accompany SFOR demining teams so that MRE could be performed during the winter months when other MA activities are less active.

**Genesis Project.** Genesis Project is a non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska. The non-profit organization began its mission in 1996 and has done many activities to encourage safety around landmines. For example, puppet shows are a popular method Genesis Project uses to teach children about the dangers of landmines as well as their rights as children and health topics such as disease prevention. Other goals of Genesis Project include teaching communities about freedom of speech, democracy and basic human rights. In October 2003, Genesis Project, with the help of UNICEF BiH, began a project called "From Puppets to Empowerment." Genesis Project also offers guidance for war-traumatized children and families. Overall, 13,000 children benefited in 2003 from the programs established by Genesis Project.

**PRONI.** PRONI has been an active committee member in the BHMACE MRE strategy. Between June 2003 and April 2004, 4,306 residents in 36 communities received MRE through PRONI activities. A large focus has been on areas in northeast Bosnia where mines and UXO are more abundant. PRONI also provided training for 18 SFOR soldiers in Brčko district and SFOR personnel working in mine-affected villages.

**Red Cross Society of BiH.** In December 2000, a new organization was founded in BiH to help bring together the struggling country—the Red Cross Society of BiH (RCSBiH). The U.N. mission describes the RCSBiH "as one of the most important steps so far in reconciliation." The RCSBiH is comprised of two Red Cross organizations: Republika Srpska Red Cross (RCRS) and the Red Cross of the Federation of BiH.

Activities sponsored by the RCSBiH have played important and effective roles in the work of MRE in BiH. The presentations and group discussions primarily target citizens returning to the country. In 2003, over 74,353 participants attended 1,470 MRE presentations and 2,930 group discussions. The main target of the RCSBiH is males ages 19–39 who work as farmers, fishermen, hunters and woodcutters.

Events using community sports and cultural and traditional celebrations have proven convenient methods for reaching specific groups of people. Additional programs such as quiz competitions for primary schools and special equipment for men working in at-risk areas are other means of MRE.

**Spirit of Soccer.** The Spirit of Soccer (SoS) program, supported by the International Trust Fund for Humanitarian Demining and Victim Assistance, began in 1997 and is an innovative way to teach young children important concepts in mine safety through a medium they can truly appreciate. SoS director Scotty Lee developed the British NGO program after watching the graphic reports on television of civilian deaths in Bosnia. According to a presentation by the program, the goal of the SoS is "to create safe environments, to challenge young people through skills training and tactical awareness and endurance, reinforcing self-motivation as well as team spirit."<sup>3</sup>

Coaches and players learn how to identify a landmine or polluted area and what to do once they find a mine. Posters of famous soccer stars holding up landmine awareness signs strongly influence the children. As of November 2004, 10,000 children have been through the program, over 500 coaches have observed the program, 40 coaches have been trained in MRE, and 100 BiH soccer clubs have benefited from the donation of 1,500 soccer balls for 15,000 children. (For more information on the SoS program, see page 48.)

## Casualties

Mines have long been the unfortunate cause of many injuries and deaths. The people of BiH know this fact firsthand as they struggle through each

day in an attempt to avoid being the next mine victim. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross database, as of July 1, 2004, 4,843 individuals have been counted as killed or injured by landmines or UXO since 1996. Though this number is not low, a positive point to make is that casualties are on a downward trend. For example, 72 incidents were reported in 2002, while only 23 people were killed and 31 injured in 2003 from such incidents, a 25-percent decrease.

One of the most publicized mine accident incidents was the Orahovac case that resulted in the deaths of three Bosnian children. The children went into a field and stepped on a landmine. Controversy arose around the concern that the area was not well-marked. Mr. Orahovac was put on trial because he had been the director of the BHMACE under whose supervision the field had been marked. BHMACE proved that the area had indeed been marked and Mr. Orahovac was cleared of the charges. "It was a very painful tragedy when three children were killed by the mine," said Bojinovic and Balic. "From that moment people in our country became more aware of the mine problem and the importance of education for children [at home and in school]."<sup>2</sup>

## A Look to the Future: BiH in Five Years

Although BHMACE has more mines to remove and destroy before becoming a mine-safe country, the staff is taking this responsibility with admirable determination. The goal is to become a country that is safe from mines and UXO, and as Bojinovic and Balic said, one "where individuals can live a safe, peaceful and normal life, where development can take place unimpeded and where victims of mines are integrated into society."<sup>2</sup> In the next five years, BHMACE will work with national and international parties, Bojinovic and Balic added, "to conduct the necessary MA in order to ensure the re-establishment of a safe environment for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina thereby allowing a safe return to the conditions of normal life and development."<sup>2</sup> ♦

See "References and Endnotes" on page 106

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